

Message Text

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PAGE 01 USUN N 02806 062200Z

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SUBJECT: OUTER SPACE COMMITTEE: JULY 5, 1978

1. SUMMARY: THE JULY 5 SESSION OF THE OUTER SPACE COMMITTEE (OSC) DISCUSSED GEOSTATIONARY ORBIT AND NUCLEAR POWER SOURCES IN SPACE. THERE WAS GENERAL AGREEMENT THAT THE LEGAL SUBCOMMITTEE (LSC) AND THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBCOMMITTEE (STSC) SHOULD CONTINUE TO CONSIDER QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE GEOSTATIONARY ORBIT, AND THAT THE SECRETARIAT SHOULD UPDATE ITS STUDY ON THE SUBJECT. ON NUCLEAR POWER SOURCES IN SPACE, US STRESSED THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN NUCLEAR REACTORS AND RADIO ISOTOPE THERMOELECTRIC SYSTEMS. THE OSC REACHED CONSENSUS ON INFORMAL WORKING GROUP'S NUCLEAR POWER SOURCES TEXT FOR ITS REPORT AND RESOLUTION (USUN 2782). ON DRAFT RESOLUTION TEXT CONCERNING NOTIFICATION, A NUMBER OF DELEGATIONS NOTED WORD "EARTH" IS UNDERSTOOD TO INCLUDE "EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE." END SUMMARY.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 USUN N 02806 062200Z

2. DELEGATIONS GENERALLY REITERATED THEIR VIEWS ON THE GEOSTATIONARY ORBIT. CONVICTION WAS EXPRESSED BY CERTAIN DELEGATIONS (COLOMBIA, ECUADOR AND KENYA) THAT THIS ITEM MUST CONTINUE TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE LSC AND BY THE STSC, AND THAT THE SECRETARIAT SHOULD UPDATE ITS STUDY OF THIS MATTER. INDIAN REP, WHILE GENERALLY SUPPORTING THIS VIEW, STATED THAT STSC SHOULD LOOK AT THE SUBJECT IN

A BROADER WAY, I.E., WHAT WILL BE HAPPENING WITH REGARD TO THE GEOSTATIONARY ORBIT IN 20 YEARS. BRAZILIAN DEL ALSO SUGGESTED THAT THE SECRETARIAT PREPARE A NEW STUDY ON THE LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE GEOSTATIONARY ORBIT.

3. ON NUCLEAR POWER SOURCES IN SPACE, THE CANADIAN REP CAREFULLY SET FORTH THE STEPS TAKEN BY HIS COUNTRY IN SEARCH FOR DEBRIS FROM COSMOS 954. HE ALSO NOTED THAT THE USSR HAD BEEN TOLD THAT CANADA WILL MAKE A CLAIM FOR PAYMENT OF COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SEARCH IN ACCORDANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL LAW. SOVIET REP MAIORSKI GAVE AN EXTENDED BRIEFING ON HIS COUNTRY'S USE OF NUCLEAR POWER SOURCES, STRESSING THAT LONG TERM SPACE PROGRAMS DEPEND ON THE USE OF SUCH DEVICES. HE STATED THAT SOVIET PLANNERS GIVE DUE REGARD TO SAFETY MEASURES. IN COMMENTING ON TEXT AGREED TO BY THE INFORMAL WORKING GROUP, HE NOTED THAT IN PRINCIPLE USSR CAN ACCEPT THE DRAFT REPORT AND RESOLUTION, BUT IT IS TO BE UNDERSTOOD THAT THE TERM "NUCLEAR POWER SOURCES" MEANS REACTORS AND ISOTOPE DEVICES.

4. USREP HELMAN'S STATEMENT STRESSED THAT (1) THERE ARE TWO MAJOR TYPES OF NUCLEAR POWER SOURCES USED IN OUTER SPACE--NUCLEAR REACTORS AND RADIO ISOTOPE THERMOELECTRIC SYSTEMS AND THAT THIS FACT SHOULD BE REFLECTED IN FUTURE WORK OF THE OSC AND ITS SUBCOMMITTEES, AND (2)
UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 USUN N 02806 062200Z

THESE SYSTEMS DIFFER IN BOTH THEIR POWER CAPABILITY AND THEIR SAFETY ASPECTS. HE NOTED THAT THE US HAS HAD EXPERIENCE WITH BOTH TYPES OF SYSTEMS AND A MORE DETAILED DISCUSSION OF THE US EXPERIENCE IS CONTAINED IN THE WORKING PAPER SUBMITTED BY THE US TO THE STSC IN FEBRUARY 1978.

5. IN COMMENTING ON THE INFORMAL WORKING GROUP'S NUCLEAR POWER SOURCES IN SPACE TEXT, CANADA, SWEDEN, JAPAN, UK, US, FRG, AND FRANCE NOTED THAT THEY UNDERSTOOD THE WORD "EARTH," AS USED AT THE END OF THE SECOND PARAGRAPH IN THE RESOLUTION TEXT TO INCLUDE THE "EARTH'S SURFACE AND THE EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE." THE USSR (BY PREARRANGEMENT) DID NOT RESPOND TO THIS POINT.

6. INDONESIA NOTED THAT THE SUBJECTS OF SOLAR ENERGY AND CONTACT WITH EXTRATERRESTIAL BEINGS HAD NOT BEEN DISCUSSED. NIGERIA VOICED CONCERN OVER ITS ABILITY TO SEARCH FOR AND CLEAN UP DEBRIS FALLING ON ITS COUNTRY FROM OUTER SPACE WITHOUT HELP FROM OTHER COUNTRIES. HE SUGGESTED THAT ASSISTANCE IN SUCH CASES BE CONSIDERED IN THE COURSE OF THE OSC'S CONSIDERATION OF

NUCLEAR POWER SOURCES.

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